535 semi-darkness.
123 Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

[533] After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

582 836 622 Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in by the old Chief. I said, "How?"

583 [939] He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called 'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and protection. At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

944 845 When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily, but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper [543] for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

462 [343] [482] In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This consists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

622 595 There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old, or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls, so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

932 825 They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.

123 [282] It was a beautiful morning in early May, and the water was still as a pond, reflecting all the sunrise tints like a mirror. After a breakfast of clams and broth, bread and sand and bronco tea, we made a big smoke and were answered by a similar smoke two miles off, so we knew our friends were on the way.

123 482 [415] In one hour they began trailing in, the women each with a load on her head, walking graceful and erect. On one head was an inverted turtle shell containing nearly all the family belongings done up in rags. On the top was the most precious belonging of all---the rifle. The man carried two or three ollas and other things on a shoulder stick. Everything necessary for their home was carried on their heads.

123 Soon the Indian Blanco was seen paddling in his *balsa;* he also had a load and had paddled all the way from Ironwood camp against wind and sometimes tide. As they were all very thirsty we gave them water around. They immediately went to the shore as it was low tide, and began gathering small oysters from the rocks. Soon each woman returned with a half bushel of them on her head.

About three o'clock and for an hour or so thereafter, Antonio Herrera, the Chief's son Chico, the old Chief Juan Tomas, two other men and one woman, came drifting into camp with their dogs. Each one was loaded with things. They were a pretty wild looking bunch. There was very little food and little water for so many.

648 731 The Chief said that a day or two before, some of his men had a fight with some sailors (Mexicans) on the Island of San Estevan four or five miles off the south west corner of Tiburon. Nobody was killed, but the two boats, the wealth of the Island, had drifted away and were lost, leaving eight men marooned on the Island. They had gone there to gather *sescal* to make drink to celebrate a wedding to come off soon. Three men were five days without water. They sent up frantic smoke signals every day. At last they were seen, and help went for them in the only remaining boat on the Island. They were rescued.

648 484 123 The Chief and his men and women, with us, are going to Hermosille ninety miles afoot with all their belongings to ask the Government for food and help.

142 [622] The Chief looks to be seventy years old, a grim dark-skinned individual with a thin fringe of hair on his upper lip, broad nose, wide nostrils, small black eyes. He is well-built and erect. None of those that I have seen so far have any fat. They are lean and sinewy. [302] The young men are of large build, high cheek bones, some with hair on [291] their lips, their long black hair braided; sometimes with a strand of red worsted. All were either barefooted or wore sandals. I saw one pair of sandals made out of turtle hide; another of burro hide.

648 123 When the Chief arrived, the sail of a vessel was seen over the beach. Bob recognized it as belonging to a launch of a Yaqui Indian

[text continues on p 180]

123 but nothing happened.

123 622 [116] We reached Hermosillo at three in the afternoon, and as we landed Roberto and Sara met us, and Roberto embraced me. Then the Seri Indian Chief rushed up and fairly hugged me in his joy at seeing me again. A timid wild-looking Seri boy, of fifteen years of age, shyly shook hands with the *Americano*, while all the Mexican men and women, fully one hundred in number, looked on open-mouthed and wide-eyed, to see the Chief of the wildest and lowest of savage Indians in North America, rush up and embrace a white man.

We all climbed into Roberto's auto-truck, and my things were brought to Hotel Cohen, and then we all went to Roberto's home and stayed all the afternoon. He had just returned from the coast the day before, and Juan Tomas was determined to come also and greet me, and the boy---a nephew---hung on to the Chief, and finally Roberto said he would have to return on foot if he brought him. Juan Tomas said that made no difference. He would walk to the coast eighty or ninety miles, if only he could come.

[291] [302] He was probably seventy-five years old. He wore a hat, but his hair was straggly and he had a slight moustache. He wore shirt and trousers and a dirty kilt---remanent of the Pelican-skin-kilt---around his waist, and he was barefooted. The boy had a not unpleasant face, long wild hair, shirt, pants, and a cotton kilt reached to his knees. He, too, was barefooted.

I gave the Chief a knife, and the boy a red crayon and fifty cents. With the crayon he made a V on his kilt. He was very shy and always kept in a shadow, or in the background, and he spoke no Spanish although he knew the Spanish alphabet.

Sara showed some photographs and postcards in a baloptican in a dark room, and among them were pictures of some Seris and myself. These created much excitement with the Chief and the boy, and they jabbered together in the Seri language with animation. They recognized some of the subjects, their own people.

584 622 648 123 Juan Tomas is to be married soon to an elderly Seri dame, and we have been invited to attend the fiesta. He has been laying in the trousseau for the bride, and several gallons of mescal. A steer or burro will have to be provided, and all the fixin's and nothing will be left undone to make a very festive occasion. When asked to show us his gifts he reluctantly brought forth a package which he carefully unwrapped and disclosed eighteen yards of *manta*, two red pieces and one pink piece of Calico, some red handkerchiefs, and one box for painting the face. He carefully wrapped these up again and put them in the room set apart for him and the boy.

[508] [523] The woman he is to marry has no male relatives from whom she can be bought, so the Chief appointed a man and created him Uncle *pro-tempore*, and to him the Chief is going to give a rifle and a blanket as the purchase price. Pretty high!

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*Juan Tomas - Chief of Seris, 1922*

# *War Chief of the Seris*

622 765 There is sorrow and mourning on that little known island in the Gulf of California, Tiburon.

[164] During the last few years, many of the Seri tribesmen have succumbed to influenza and pneumonia, and many a night has the weird and melancholy wailing for the dead mingled with the soft lapping of the waters of the Gulf on the shores of that lovely desert isle.

But now a universal grief has overtaken the remnants of a once powerful and warlike tribe---Juan Tomas (*Pih-tan-aohe*, "Very Brave" in his own language)---the old War Chief of the Seris, is no more. He has fought a last and losing battle. For a month, maybe for several months, the women will wail and lament, and around the tribal camp fires, for many a night, the Seris will tell of his exploits and miraculous escapes, as they told Roberto Thomson, their friend and advisor.

[164] The old Chief died on the shores of Kino Bay opposite Alcatraz Island, probably of pneumonia.

There was no soft mattress to lie upon, no pillow to rest his head, and no roof to shelter him from sun or storm. His bed was the sand of the sea shore; his canopy, the blue heavens above, and his [163] requiem, the solemn beating of the surf on the shore. His last words were to his grand-nephews to inherit the *Sierra de las Tinajas*, and he asked the Indians and his *Yori* (Mexican) friends to protect his nephews and the mountains.

622 764 His body was wrapped in an old *serape*, fastened around by rope of native fibre. His grave was dug with paddles from the canoes, four and one-half feet deep in the sand hills near the sea. He was placed in the grave with his head to the north, face up, with the carapace of a sea turtle covering his head. Amid much lamentation and mourning, the grave was partially filled, and then a heavy layer of *cholla* cactus spread over. The grave was then filled and mounded up and covered with *chollas*, *mesquite*, shells, and thorny growths, and also a five-gallon can. The cactus spines were to discourage coyotes.

622 Thus passed a very striking character among the primitive races of Sonora, Mexico. He was brave and fearless in battle; crafty, cautious, and cunning in attack; cruel and merciless to his enemies. He was rarely caught off his guard, and always managed to extricate himself and his men from difficult situations. He was quick to think and act, and was wise with the wisdom learned at first hand on desert and sea from a rugged nature, reluctant to give up her secrets. He was a master hand at *balsa* building, a good hunter, fisherman, harpooner of *cahuama* (sea turtle), a good surfman, a good gambler, and an expert tracker. It was not unusual to possess two or three wives, but the old Chief, while married three times, had only one wife at a time. He was quite fond of the writer, and used to greet him with the true Mexican *abrazo*.

[575]

[123] It was in 1922 that I first met the grim old warrior on the shores of Tiburon, whither I had gone on a quest for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

[142] He was very dark, of medium height, thick set, with a broad, deep chest, very muscular, with shaggy brows and deep set eyes which, even at that age, ninety years, burned like coals of fire, and were suspicious and wary. He wore a braided pigtail down his back which contained a few gray hairs. For clothing, he wore a ragged shirt and an old pair of overalls, with a short kilt hanging from a belt, through which stuck a long naked knife of hoop iron, ground on abrasive rocks and keen as a razor.

[302] [290] [411]

[291] From infancy to the grave, the freedom of his feet was never hampered by shoes. Even at that advanced age, and until his last illness, he was perfectly able to care for himself, and follow his nomadic tribe on its devious trails along the coast and far in the interior. A walk of a hundred miles was not unusual. For ten rifle cartridges a Seri Indian once walked forty or fifty miles to deliver my message to Juan Tomas. From the time we first met, our friendship was never broken.

[484]

642 621 618 714 [186] [476]

The third specification states that a kin group, to constitute a clan, must exhibit actual social integration. Murdock stresses the necessity of observing a positive group sentiment, such as would be manifested by organized collective activities or group functions, before the group can be characterized as a clan. An essential feature of this group sentiment is the inclusion of the wife as an integral member of her husband's kin group.

621 618 [628] [622] [701] [583] [476]

This sort of social integration was indeed exhibited by the Seri kin group of each subdivision. It was, in fact, fostered by the isolation brought about by the inhabitants' reservation of hunting and fishing rights for themselves. Tension existed between certain subdivisions and, since there was no chief, the oldest capable male organized and led the fighting force of the clan. In times of need, the members of the group united to give mutual assistance. The groom-to-be could expect material aid from his fellow clan members in the payment of the bride price. Mutual assistance was given in the fulfillment of puberty ceremony and burial obligations. The men cooperated in their hunting and fishing expeditions. The women of the clan, including the in-married spouses, cooperated in the gathering and sharing of food. Everyone could attend the various fiestas. It is said that in the performance of these collective activities, close harmony generally prevailed.

## BAND INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

642 619 578 [648]

The division of the Seri tribe into bands was likely brought about through internal strife. During the period of band history known to the present-day Seri,[8] however, serious skirmishes seem to have been fought predominantly with non-Seri groups.[9]

### Band I

642 621 628 578 [721] [648]

Band I internal relations appear to have been relatively peaceful. The inhabitants of subdivisions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were fishermen as well as hunters and gatherers, whereas the people of subdivision 6 preferred to subsist on gathered food and wild game. Also, the members of Band I robbed cattle and horses, which pursuit brought reprisals from the Mexican ranchers. There was apparently considerable social intercourse among the six subdivisions, even to the extent that hunting rights of one were sometimes granted to inhabitants of a neighboring section.

Trouble developed when some members of Band I speared fish within the domain of Band V. Here also bitter fighting broke out, and any semblance of peaceful co-existence between the two groups was destroyed.